

Good Morning.

For the record, my name is Michelle Layton. Along with Donna Selden, who will be speaking later on her own behalf, I co-chair the Sandy Spring Ashton Rural Preservation Consortium.

I live at 17905 Ednor View Terrace, which is 2 miles from the proposed Ashton Meeting Place.

Today I am speaking on behalf of the SSARPC.

As our name implies, the SSARPC's mission is to support development in historic Ashton that conforms to the Master Plan, in order to preserve the historic rural village that Ashton is. We are, in fact, Pro-Master Plan, not anti development.

The steering committee of the SSARPC is pleased to say that, in our opinion, the current site plan for the Ashton Meeting Place substantially conforms to the Sandy Spring Ashton Master Plan.

3 years in the making, this site plan illustrates what can be accomplished if developers and citizens work together along with Park and Planning, State Highway Administration the Department of Public Works and Transportation and all other agency staff.

This plan is truly proof that cooperation, not conflict, brings success.

The current site plan includes elements agreed upon at a charette attended by the SSARPC, the developer and several other community members in July of 2007.

The plan today has true active fronts that will generate pedestrian activity as prescribed by the Master Plan and secures on street parking on both frontages. The size, scale, form and pattern of the buildings are reminiscent of a rural village center. The architectural details are compatible with a rural village. The once 48,000 sq.ft. grocery store is now an 18,000 sq ft. building no longer sitting on Rt. 108 with fake doors and windows.

Finally, in an agreement at the July charette, 6 single family units of mixed design will be built on the R-60 parcel with detached garages.

Two issues, however, remain. We have been given assurance that the developer will change the green on the corner of the property to reflect a center path that lets out into the center, but to date, we have not seen any confirmation of this in the plan. Also, there is no written assurance that the houses that front the access road will, in fact, be a mix of house sizes with detached garages on the R-60 portion as agreed on at the July charette

Additionally, today's images seem to portray an overuse of brick on the buildings. The Master Plan calls for and we support a use of mixed materials. Lighting and signage are still of concern.

The SSRPC recommends that the PB approve this plan with the stated conditions and continue to demand that development proposals in our area adhere to the Master Plan's vision and guidelines.

As the next 3 Sandy Spring/Ashton projects come before you, it is the belief of the SSRPC that certain elements of the Master Plan need not be debated anymore.

As we have seen with the Ashton Meeting Place project, active fronts should truly be active in any design and function. Moving a building to the street does not make an active front automatically. Off street parking needs to be in the back of the buildings incorporating on street parking if possible and the size, scale and form of the buildings should look like it fits into a rural village design.

It is also particularly important to note that one Master Plan compliant corner does not a rural village center make. We have all worked so hard to get this project to where it is today. It will always be important to remember that as each quadrant of the Ashton Village Center comes up for redevelopment, it is the vision of the Master Plan that must remain in the forefront, not the need for loading docks and number of gas station pumps needed to turn a profit.

As we come to the conclusion of a very long, but important process, it becomes clear that the marriage of community, developer and planner is important now more than ever. As the cost of gas becomes higher and higher, development in our area should help the community move toward the future, but maintain the spirit that brought that community there in the first place.

We are appreciative of Mr. Nichols's efforts to work with the community to bring a Master Plan compliant plan to fruition.

We also commend Commissioners Cryer and Bryant's note on the replacement tree of a particular caliber if the existing tree does not survive.

We especially thank Park and Planning staff for having soundly and completely researched and commented on a plan that supports the vision of the Sandy Spring-Ashton Master Plan.

Thank you.